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Grizzlies ride 5-game win streak to Inland Empire

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GRIZZLIES RIDE 5-GAME WIN STREAK
TO INLAND EMPIRE

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MISSOULA.....

The Montana Grizzlies take a 5-game win streak to Spokane and Moscow this weekend for games with the Gonzaga Bulldogs and Idaho Vandals. The Grizzlies, having beaten the Zags 53-50 and the Vandals 55-50 in Missoula, are currently 13-4 overall and 5-1 in Big Sky action. UM is tied for second place in the conference with Weber State, one game behind league leading Idaho State.

Both games this weekend can be heard on Missoula's KYLT Radio with Bill Schwanke's pregame show airing at 7:45 p.m. MST for Gonzaga on Friday and 7:50 p.m. MST for Idaho on Saturday. Tip-off is at 8:00 p.m. Friday and 8:05 p.m. Saturday.

The Grizzlies earned two hard-fought victories this past weekend over the Zags and Vandals in the Adams Field House. UM held off Gonzaga 53-50 in a defensive struggle, then came back Saturday night with a 55-50 decision over a stalling Idaho club. Under the circumstances, Head Basketball Coach Jim Brandenburg was pleased to have the wins.

"In light of having a different lineup on the court, we were pleased to win a pair this past weekend," Brandenburg said. "In both games, our club came up with the big play when we needed it and that's to their credit. Both Gonzaga and Idaho extended us to the very end at home. We must improve and play better to win this coming weekend on the road."

Montana was without the services of sophomore center Lee Johnson and senior guard Ben DeMers in the Gonzaga game and without Johnson in the Idaho game.

"We played good defense against Gonzaga at times and played good defense early in the Idaho game," Brandenburg said, "but Idaho's stalling tactics made it difficult to maintain concentration." The Griz and Vandals were tied up at 32 apiece at halftime, but the Vandals went into a stall in the second half, resulting in a 23-18 second half score. A couple of key UM steals and converted buckets iced the game for Montana.

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"Idaho's strategy almost won the game," Brandenburg noted. "Although it's frustrating to play a slow-down game like that, I can't fault the Vandals for doing it. But you just can't lose patience against that style of play. We finally did regain poise and patience, stole some passes, converted them and regained the lead."

Michael Ray Richardson led the UM scoring attack over the weekend with 19 points against Gonzaga and 16 against Idaho, earning scoring honors in both games. "Michael Ray displayed a great deal of leadership and took charge of the action in both games," Brandenburg said. "Both Gonzaga and Idaho respect his ability to the point where they make defensive adjustments to Michael Ray. That does give our club the ability to do other things though."

Reed Schifferman led Gonzaga in scoring Friday night with 16 points. Jim Grady was the team's leading rebounder with six boards. Michael John Richardson pulled down 12 rebounds to lead UM. Michael Ray took 11 in addition to his 19 points.

James Smith's 14 points paced Idaho in Saturday night's game. Rodney Johnson pulled down eight rebounds for the Vandals. Michael John picked off nine rebounds and Michael Ray had six for the Griz. M.J. and Kirk Rocheleau scored 12 points each to supplement M.R.'s 16.

Following the weekend pair on the road, Montana takes a break from league action with a non-conference game at home against Utah State. The Grizzlies and Aggies meet at 8 p.m. on Tuesday, Feb. 8th in the Adams Field House.